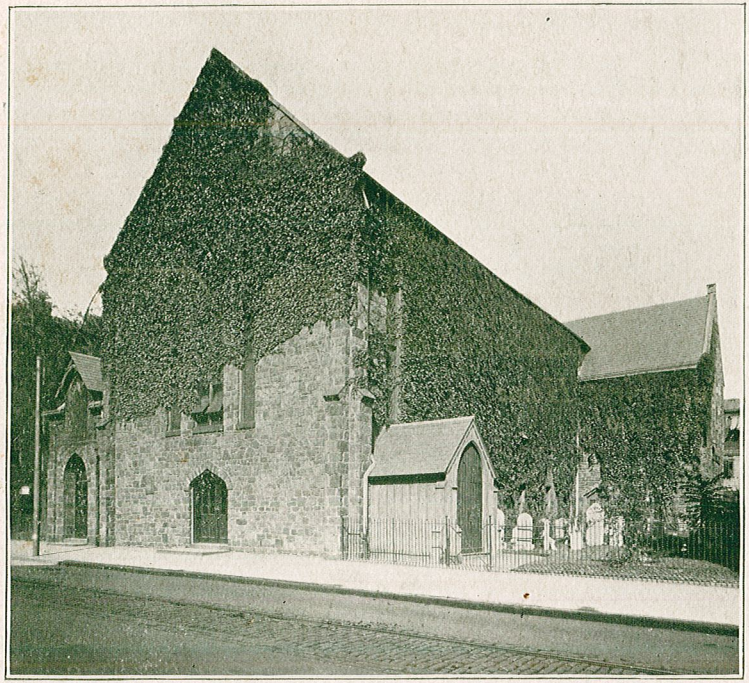
All Saints Church

Twelfth Street below Fitzwater
Philadelphia

1827 1908

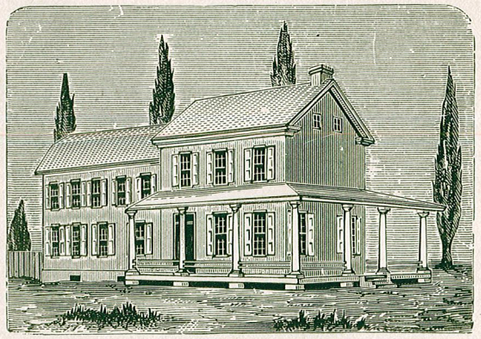
All Saints Church



Twelfth Street below Fitzwater

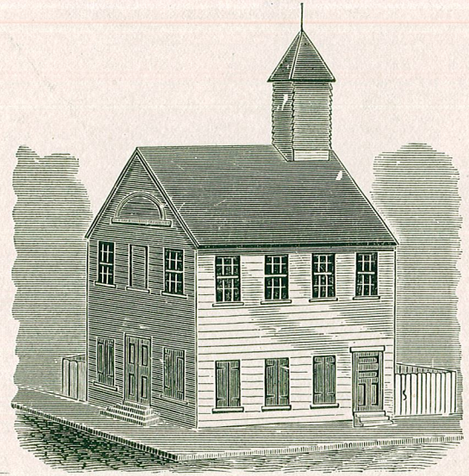
Rev.
John E. Hill
Rector

Rev.
H. L. Duhring
Rector
Emeritus



All Saints First Home

1827–1830



All Saints Second Home

1830–1847

HISTORY

ALL SAINTS CHURCH originated in a Sunday School. A question from a little girl's lips awakened the idea. One Sunday morning in February, 1827, Miss Ann Ritchie, a member of St. Peter's Parish, was on her way to Sunday School, when near Twelfth and Shippen Streets she was stopped by the little girl with the question, " Please tell me where I can go to Sunday School?" These few words prompted her to seek the aid of friends to start a school in that neighborhood. Mrs. Mary Gurney was appealed to and after thinking the matter over and learning of the spiritual destitution prevailing in the neighborhood, accompanied Miss Ritchie in search of scholars.

On March 18th, 1827, the school was opened, with six teachers from St. Peter's Church, who were gratified with the presence of twenty scholars. They assembled in the lower part of a house on Shippen Lane, which was rented at four dollars per month. All necessary furniture was donated by Mrs. Gurney The Sunday School held two sessions, but, as there was no Episcopal Church in the vicinity, the teachers were obliged to close their exercises in time to reach their place of worship. Owing to some difficulty with the landlord, the first meeting place was abandoned after a few months and the classes moved to Cherry Grove, where Mrs. Gurney offered them the use of her large parlor. As the parents of the scholars seldom attended any place of worship, measures were taken to secure the services of a clergyman. This object was made known to the Rev. Jackson Kemper and met with his approval. He, with other clergymen, held services in Mrs. Gurney's parlor one evening in the week. Occasionally the clergy would visit the school. The first sermon preached on a Sunday was by Bishop William White.

Miss Ann Ritchie

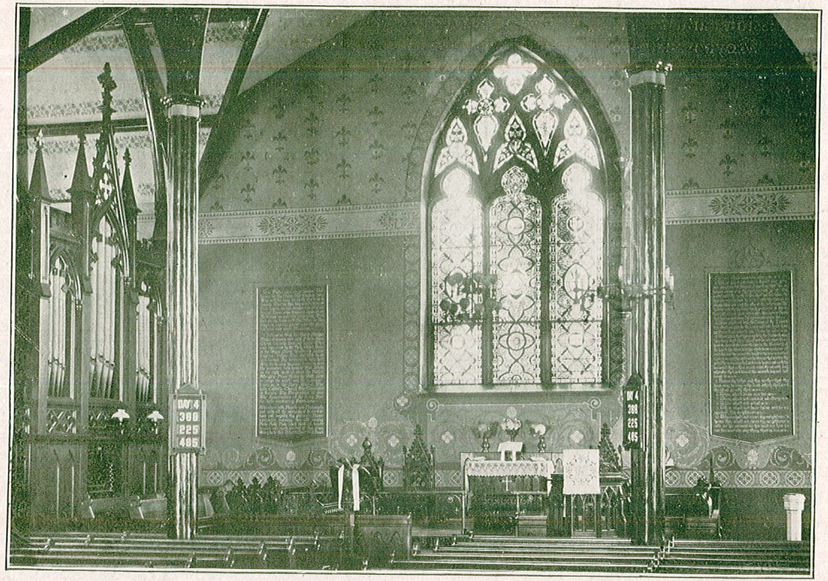
Interior View of Church

About this period the Society for the Advancement of Christianity in Pennsylvania came to the aid of the mission, and for about ten years extended its fostering care. The Rev. William Bryant, Missionary in Moyamensing, "resolved, with the approval of the Committee of Missions, to devote his whole time to this whitening field." It was believed that a large congregation would attend the evening services if held in the populated neighborhood, and Mr. William Moore offered the use of his house. The prospects of this station depended, he said, "upon the erection of a building for the use of the school, and which may be used as a place of worship." His hope was soon realized, and a humble but substantial tabernacle was erected at the Northwest corner of Shippen Lane and Fitzwater Street. The building was two-story frame. *The 14th of February, 1830, is memorable in our history, as it marks the close of the "parlor services"* and the commencement of the glorious work in the "Moyamensing School House." The history of the parish from now to the laying of the corner-stone of the present church is a record of trials and disappointments. Upon the organization of the parish, by the election of a Vestry in 1836, the Rev. William Bryant was elected Rector. He did valiant work for the Master. In 1845 the Rev. Henry Major was elected Rector. It was during his rectorship that our charter was secured.

The Ladies' Missionary Society of All Saints Church saw the need of erecting a church that should endure for generations, and desired that the new building be placed at the corner of Broad and Fitzwater Streets, but after a great deal of deliberation the Vestry selected the present site. The corner-stone of the edifice was laid by Bishop Potter on April 15th, 1846. The new edifice was forty-two feet wide by eighty feet deep, built of stone in rubble work and pointed. The Rev. Henry Major resigned and was succeeded by the Rev. Henry Montgomery.

On Sunday, January 17th, 1847, the congregation, being too large for their mission building, gladly hastened into their new

Mrs. Mary Gurney



View of Chancel

church, the Bishop confirming seventeen persons on the afternoon of the same day. The walls were unplastered, the roof unceiled and the cold blast of winter whistling through the crevices, made the church anything but comfortable. The building was subsequently finished by the proceeds from a fair, and was consecrated by Bishop Potter on January 27th, 1848.

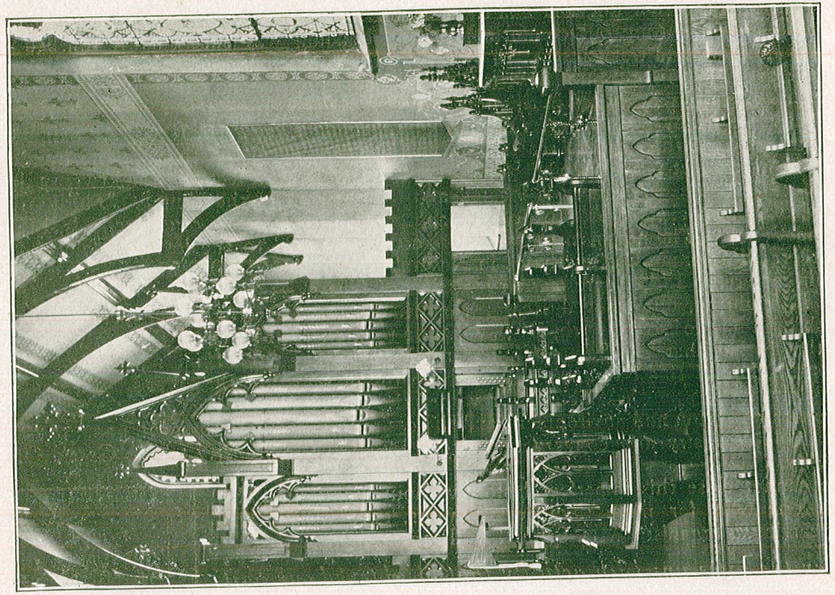
As the congregation and Sunday School continued to increase, an enlargement was necessary. The corner-stone was redeposited in the northeast corner of the transept on June 6th, 1853. The church was reopened by Bishop Potter on Sunday afternoon, May 28th, 1854. All Saints Church is cruciform without the chancel recess. The nave and chancel together are one hundred feet deep and forty-two feet in width, while the transepts are twenty-six feet wide and twenty-three and one-half feet in depth. A gallery is located at the west end of the church. The basement is divided into four spacious rooms, which are appropriated to the uses of the schools, Bible-class, library and Vestry. The northern entrance was erected in 1882 to the loving memory of Emma Boyd Greer. The organ was purchased in November, 1857 for $1500. After the resignation of Mr. Montgomery, in 1855, there was a succession of four short rectorships. In May, 1867, the Rev. H. L. Duhring, our beloved Rector Emeritus, became Rector of the parish. He served the parish faithfully to March 30th, 1895, when he took charge of a larger field for work. It was during this period that All Saints Church reached the summit of its power and influence. Towards the close of this rectorship and down to the present time there has been a steady influx of colored and foreign people which has prevented the church from doing aggressive work. It was owing to this condition and environment and the desire to perpetuate the good name of All Saints Church that the Vestry and congregation decided to sell the property to the Greek Orthodox Community.

We cannot close this imperfect history without mentioning the name of one who, for more than twenty years, gave willing and efficient service as organist—Mrs. Samuel Milligan.

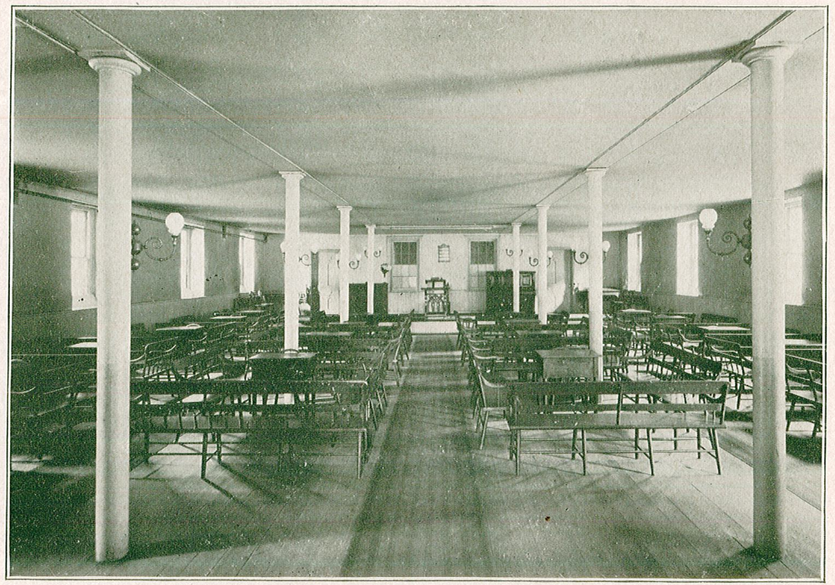
May the same unselfish activity that brightened our past give us hope for the future.

Parish Statistics

Confirmed	1427
Baptized	4862
Marriages	2680
Burials	2635



View of Organ



View of Sunday School Room

View of Rector's Study